

**Intro:** Whenever we hear the name Jonah, we think of a whale or great fish. Whenever the secular world or the liberal religious world hears the name Jonah, they think of fairy tales and make believe characters.

The idea of Jonah being swallowed by a whale or great fish puts the story into the miracle realm, thus those who reject all supernatural aspects of life, quickly reject the reality and the truths associated with the story of Jonah.

But should they? The liberal theologians amaze me. If they believe in God, how can they limit God to human standards and natural laws? If God exists, and there is much evidence that He does, then He must be all powerful to truly be God.

As in the case of Jonah, he wasn't the last to be swallowed by a great fish and live to tell about it. In the 1800's there was more than one confirmed case by secular newspapers of a person being swallowed by a large fish, that was subsequently caught and the person being rescued.

In Jonah's case, however, we not only have the book of Jonah, we have an account by other Biblical writers of his existence. In 2 Kings 14:25 we find that Jonah was a prophet in the days of King Jeroboam II of Israel. Jesus also confirmed Jonah's existence and the great fish. There is no way you can reject Jonah and the great fish without rejecting the divinity of Jesus.

Jonah was sent by God to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. He was sent to preach repentance to the Nineveh. History shows that the Assyrians were a very cruel and indescribably evil people.

The focus of Jonah is not a great fish or whale, the miracle of Jonah's deliverance from the sea, or how prophets should or shouldn't behave. The main truths in Jonah include God's love, God call for us to love, God's sovereignty, and how we can't escape from God's judgment, God's love, and God's presence.

Today we begin a short series from the book of Jonah. The book of Jonah is one of the 12 minor prophet books in the Bible.

They are not called minor because they are less important than others. The minor simply means they are shorter books as compared to the major ones.

The Minor Prophets are located at the end of the Old Testament. The book of Jonah is found between the books of Obadiah and Micah and in our pew Bibles provided for you, it is found on page 982 .

**Read Text: Jonah 1:1-17**

Although a large fish swallowing Jonah doesn't take a miracle, the fact that Jonah stayed in its belly 3 days and then was deposited back on the shore where he originally started from, does qualify as a miracle. We also see other miracles in it. For instance, later on in the book there's the spectacle growth of the vine, and the sudden repentance of the Ninevites.

Now the first thing we want to look at in this chapter is the call.

### **I. God's Call**

Throughout history God has called people of all nationalities to repent. But the method He used in the Old Testament was different from the New Testament and from today. In the Old Testament God would choose a certain person to be His spokesman and then occasionally give them a message to be delivered, most usually to the Jewish people. Jonah however is the one exception, for he was called to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria to warn them of God's impending judgment. The Assyrians were Gentiles. We see even here God's love for all people. It has always been God's plan to save whosoever will believe and repent.

In the New Testament days, and today, God doesn't call one person, but all believers to take His message to the world. In both the Old and New Testament He called on people to repent, but now He also calls them to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Those who do accept Christ as Savior, are then called to be light and salt to the world. They are called to be messengers, ambassadors to the world.

In the Old Testament it was the job of the prophets to get the Word out, but today it's

the job of the priests and according to the New Testament, every believer is a priest of God. *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy"* (1 Peter 2: 9-10)

Every believer is just as much a spokesperson for God as was Jonah. And every believer is called by God to take the message of repentance to all people, to the Ninevites, and to all other nations.

### **1. His Call To Repent**

Jonah's initial call was to go to the Ninevites and preach repentance. The sins of the Assyrians had gotten God's attention. Our sins always do.

If you are living outside of God's will, He is calling you to repent. If you have never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, God has commissioned me and all other believers to warn you just like God commanded Jonah to warn the Ninevites.

Our sin doesn't go unnoticed. God's judgment is real. God sees all, knows all, and will one day judge all things and everyone. But before judgment, God sends His servants out to call on us to repent. He did it for the Ninevites and He did it for Jonah.

Sometimes the messenger himself needs to repent. We see in our story of Jonah that not only does ungodly Ninevites need to repent, but disobedient God followers need to repent.

If you think being baptized, having your name on the church membership roll, or having been given the task of warning others to repent will protect you from God's wrath, your wrong. God hates sin, regardless of who is sinning. This was true of Jonah. He was a messenger of repentance, but He too needed to repent.

Is this true of you? Is there an area in your life that is in rebellion toward God?

Has God asked you to do something that you keep putting off? Are you failing to obey His command to love all people?

When God called Jonah to go preach repentance the Ninevites, He was calling on Jonah to love the Ninevites.

### **2. His Call To Love**

When Jesus gave His disciples the commandment to love God and others, He wasn't giving them something new. God gave the Israelites these commandments in the 10 commandments. God has always commanded us to love others.

This command to go the Ninevites reveals that the God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. In the New Testament Jesus commanded His disciples to love their enemies, and here in Jonah, God is telling Jonah to preach repentance to his enemies, the Ninevites. He is telling Jonah to love the Ninevites by warning them of danger.

True love is not about making people happy by telling them what they want to hear. True love is wanting what's best for people in the long run. To love someone is to be concerned about their eternal destination. Calling sin, sin, is not being intolerant; it's actually the loving thing to do.

Why is it so important to warn others about the consequences of their sin? Why is it so important to repent of our own sins? As Jonah discovered, God is sovereign. He sees all. He controls all. He knows all.

### **II. God's Sovereignty**

Instead of obeying God, Jonah did the opposite. He ran, or rather sailed in the opposite direction than what God wanted. Nineveh was northwest of Israel and Tarsus was west by southwest of Israel.

It wasn't that Jonah was running from Nineveh, He was running from God. Tarsus was on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. At that time it was considered to be the edge of the known world. Jonah went as far as he could from God.

In those days people thought their God was confined to the geographical boundaries

of their countries. Jonah thought he could flee from the presence of God.

We see in Jonah that we can escape the felt presence of God, but not the true presence of God. The fact that Jonah was asleep in the bottom of the ship while the storm was ragging outside is a good example of this.

The same is true when we run from God's presence, and we can run from His presence in a lot of different ways. We can drop out of church, stop reading our Bibles, fill our lives with activities, pleasures, and sinful actions, all of which can prevent us from feeling God's presence in our lives, but just because we don't feel it, doesn't mean we are not in God's presence. We can never escape God's all seeing eye.

The storm God sent was of such magnitude that it was impossible for Jonah to ignore God. God's sovereignty includes power over all storms. God uses storms. He used this storm to get Jonah's attention. Jesus used a storm on the Sea of Galilee to get His disciples attention.

Has God used storms in your life? Relationship storms, financial storms, illness storms, and tragedy storms can be used to get our attention. Is He seeking repentance? Is He seeking redirect us in life? Is He seeking to motivate us toward spiritual growth?

If you are in a storm, there's only one way out, it's called surrender.

### III. Our Surrender

When the sailors and the captain of the ship discovered from Jonah that the storm was of divine origin for the purpose of taking Jonah, they rowed all the more harder trying to escape it. But in the end they and Jonah had to come to grips with the only way out--surrender.

God wanted Jonah's total surrender. He wants our total surrender. Jesus said, "*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever*

*loses his life for my sake will find it"*

**(Matthew 16:24-25).**

If you're here today and wonder what it means or how it's possible to be saved by God, this is it. Surrender is the key. The first step toward salvation is understanding that we are lost--that our sin has separated us from God. The second step is to understand that Jesus took our punishment that He suffered in our place. The third step is understanding that we can do nothing to save ourselves. This means we can't do enough good deeds to make up for our sins. We can't pray enough, go to church enough, read our Bibles enough, or give enough money to earn our way into heaven. All we can do is surrender to God by putting our trust in Jesus and what He did on the cross.

The only way we can ever stop running from God is to surrender to Him. People run from God because they don't know enough about God. If Jonah had known God well enough, he would have known it's useless to run from God; for how can you run from someone who is everywhere at all times?

The obvious answer is, you can't, so why try.

In the end Jonah realized this. Have you realized this? Some people go all through life running from God, while failing to realize that by running from God, they are running from God's love.

### IV. God's Love

Jonah resisted the love of God when that love is aimed at the enemy of his people. He didn't want to give the people of Nineveh a second chance. He wanted their destruction, not their repentance.

At this point God would have been justified in destroying Jonah. Never has there ever been a prophet of God who flatly refused to do what God has asked him to. The wrath of God is a real and fearful thing.

The Bible says in **Hebrews 10:30-31**, "*For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

When we find ourselves in opposite corners from God, we can't win. The only

thing we can do is surrender. Having surrender we then experienced God's love.

The God-created storm stopped Jonah from running any further, but God wasn't done with Jonah. He gives Jonah a second chance. This is something we all need. This is something that God wants to do for you now. He wants to give you a second chance; a chance to start over; a chance to become the person God wants and you want to be.

The great fish was Jonah's second chance. It swallowed him in order to save him. God sends storms our way and sometimes even great fish in order to save us, to give us a second chance.

**Conclusion:** Jonah heard the call from God, but refused to obey. Do you hear God calling you? Do you hear Him calling you to put your trust in His Son Jesus? Do you hear Him calling you to be salt and light to the world? Do you hear Him calling you to be transformed by the renewing of your mind? Do you hear Him calling out of sin, out of disbelief, and out of rebellion? If so, then come.

Series: BOOK OF JONAH

## When God Calls

**Text: Jonah 1:1-17**

**Mobile Messages  
Sharing  
God's Word**

**EDDIE FLEMING**  
**May 3, 2015**

A ministry of  
Concord General Baptist Church  
3085 Manitou Rd  
P. O. Box 630  
Manitou, KY 42436  
270-249-3623

[www.concordgeneralbaptist.org](http://www.concordgeneralbaptist.org)



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